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**Alice Tarbuck reviews Greg Thomas, *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland* (2022);
Nandini Ramesh Sankar reviews Zoë Skoulding,
Poetry & Listening: The Noise of Lyric (2020)**

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Greg Thomas, *Border Blurs: Concrete Poetry in England and Scotland*, Liverpool University Press, 318pp, 2022

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Border Blurs is a book for which the scholars of concrete poetry, and those interested in its British and Scottish contexts particularly, have long waited. Thomas covers a great deal of ground, examining over two decades of the movement's development. He also takes on the complex regional and international geographies of concrete poetry, the dissemination of ideas and networks of relation that spread as it developed. *Border Blurs* also undertakes much-needed scholarship that seeks to redress Thomas' well-supported claim that concrete poetry particularly has been 'been most conspicuously distinguished from its modernist predecessors by its long-term failure to earn serious literary-critical attention' (p.1). Multi-stranded, concrete poetry has often suffered from examination through comparatively narrow windows of focus: single poet/artists, strict time periods, or particular thematic interests and thus Thomas' broadness of scope is welcomed. The book is beautifully published, with design elements production values that echo the subject under discussion, and this is no surprise, given that Thomas is also a concrete poet/artist. The prose is similarly appealing: *Border Blurs* is rigorous and thorough, and interweaves this with a fluency and approachability that imbues it with the narrative lightness. This lightness is absolute required for exploring an epoch with such ephemeral, shifting histories, which compete, overlap, and quite literally blur one another. Thomas' deep understanding of his material facilitates clarity of chronology, as well as many discoveries and recontextualizations which reorient the boundaries and patterns of the concrete movement.

He posits diverse and concurrent sites and impulses of emergence from the offset. Thomas argues that post World War II concrete poetry takes its diversity partially from the impulse-lines along which it develops, a mix of ongoing exploration of modernist tendencies in post-1940s literary, and constructivist and dada-ist movements, and that modes diverged to create varying forms that demonstrated 'fundamentally different ideas of social progress' and that in a British context, concrete became 'inextricably bound up with questions of nationalism and national identity, for all its transnational connotations'. This gives voices to important variegations in what has often been referred to somewhat blithely as the 'international concrete movement', which we see reproduced as recently as 2016, in James Hilder's *Designed Words for A Designed World: The*

International Concrete Poetry Movement 1955–71 (2016). Whilst this international outlook represents an ongoing post-war reconstruction that seeks global unification through art, and highlights the post-linguistic or Esperanto-like qualities of concrete art and poetry, which so often offer apprehension independent from linguistic comprehension, it does not take into account the extent to which regional variance and questions of national identity form an important part of the evolution of concrete works, up to the present day. It is this intersection between the international and the intensely regional that Thomas seeks to address, though the specificities of four poet/artists and their works: Ian Hamilton Finlay, Edwin Morgan – both Scottish – and English poet/artist Bob Cobbing and English resident (though born in the Channel Islands) Dom Sylvester Houédard. The book therefore provides a dual function, contextualising British concrete works and their influences, and examining in-depth the work of these four concrete poet/artists. What Thomas navigates so well is the central issue that frustrates so many in the field – the interplay between levels of international coherence of vision in concrete poetry that occur at discrete historic moments, centred around manifestos, and the diversity of subsequent output. *Border Blurs* creates a sensitive dialogue between influence, application and ideas of ‘belonging’ to a movement which, when interpreted through the work of individual artists, particularly those in England and Scotland, is ‘perhaps best characterised by the striking lack of binding principles – stylistic or ideological’, and by their vastly differing relationships to centralised ideologies which might constitute the foundational aspects of concrete art.

Border Blurs is an ambitious text, and makes clear its limitations with sensitivity. Thomas chooses not to include pre-twentieth century influences on concrete work. This is a shame, of course, but it is entirely understandable given the scope of the text and the necessity of unified focus. Indeed, even withing twentieth century influences on concrete poetry, such a profusion of influences exist that they require streamlining. Concrete poetry is, for Thomas, divisible into two sub-movements, both umbrella terms. There is the ‘classical’ concrete of the Noigandres group and associated poet/artists, which comes to both its halt and its zenith circa 1968, and then there is a secondary form, which succeeds from this, and is birthed partly of it, and partly of other influences. This is an enormously sensible distinction, and allows *Border Blurs* to hold tight focus in its exploration of this ‘second wave’. Thomas argues cogently something which has not been so distinctly articulated before, that ‘there is a stylistic cohesiveness to this other approach to concrete that has not been sufficiently acknowledged, partly because it is hidden within the larger mass of disconnected practices [...] but also, perhaps, because of the chaotic outward characteristics of much of the work associated

with it' (51). *Border Blurs* picks routes through this chaos, and does so with nuance and complexity, but sufficient focus as to streamline tributaries into a single river.

Border Blurs is a text divided, and Thomas displays deftness in moving between the analysis of bodies of work by individuals, and replacing them in their networked contexts. Whilst each of the four chapters on single poet/artists provides new insight and contextualises their work anew, the Finlay chapter is particularly strong, introducing much-needed nuance and particularising detail to the well-worn narrative of Finlay's arrival at, and departure from, concrete form. Thomas' skill lies in analysis which allows room for the biographical, and which contextualises Finlay's work, necessarily, within the context of his difficult mental and emotional health, without resorting to apologism or hagiography. Finlay's relationship with concrete poetry has defined the trajectory of poets such as Thomas A. Clark, and many formally innovative Scottish small presses continue to work on conceptual frameworks which Finlay introduced into Scottish poetic consciousness. However, the complexities of Finlay's association with any specific artistic or poetic movements, which so define his legacy, are teased out here, to make explicit the patterns of engagement and disengagement with concrete poetry more broadly.

Border Blurs is a book which excellently fulfils its brief, and enriches the field of concrete poetry criticism considerably, shedding new light on individual practice and the movement's international evolution. Whilst it is never reasonable to criticise a book for not including an aspect of research not within its scope, there is nevertheless a sense within Thomas' work that there is more to be said on the question of gender and female participation within concrete poetry. Whilst space does not allow for this, and Thomas published an article which attempts to redress this dearth, there is nevertheless, within a field that continues to be dominated by male practitioners and critics, a sense that perhaps the book's scope ought to have been renegotiated to offer concomitant forms of formal space to the women who remain outside its covers, discussed in Thomas' article.

The lack of female participation in concrete poetry, during both the 'classical' and the 'second' waves in Scotland and England is far from an anomaly within the concrete poetry movement at its most international. Speculation has been made as to why concrete poetry, especially between the 1950s and 1970s was such an intensely male-dominated field, and whilst the poetic output of women generally at that time was comparatively lower to that of men, concrete was a particularly male-dominated field. In the article by Thomas in *Contemporary Women's Writing*, he addresses another possible reason for this, arguing that 'the kind of poetic model which concrete poetry proposed – predicated on the abandonment or attenuation of individual authorial

identity – has been seen as particularly rebarbative to women during this period of British social history'.¹ This was because, he writes, 'the willingness to cultivate modernist poetic styles associated with the symbolic transcendence of authorial identity has traditionally seemed [...] contingent on a sense that one's identity was socially validated in the first place'.² Even contemporary concrete poetry maintains an element of apprenticeship, inheritance and gatekeeping, and some of the stated reasons for the lack of women in concrete poetry – across concrete poetry criticism more broadly – tends far more toward the idea of 'barriers women failed to overcome' and focuses all too lightly on the placing and patrolling of those boundaries. Works that seek to exceed or transcend individualism and the particularities of the subjective self can also do an excellent job of eliding or concealing their creator's social attitudes, allowing them to remain uninterrogated within a working practice. The impersonality of concrete poetry can lead one away from investigating authorial attitudes.

Thomas, however, does an excellent job of beginning to objectively examine the social attitudes of the concrete poet/artists he writes on. With Finlay, he does a particularly excellent job of charting the poet's attitudes toward authority and the Scottish literature scene, and how these manifest in the work produced. The concrete movement was often explicitly political, and bound up in conversations about new ways of living, and so it feels a little difficult not to expect some acknowledgement of the fact that sexism and gatekeeping often keep those within a coterie in a state of comfort. The barriers that prevented women from entering more fully into the concrete movement were partially structural, but an investigation into even benign, 'unthinking' sexism in the concrete movement seems overdue, and despite Thomas' acknowledgment of the disparity, this is not provided here or in the article, though he does cite Perloff's comment, in relation to Mary Ellen Solt, regarding the 'still sexist climate of the early 1960s', which can be construed at the level of social structure or at the level of the individual.

The article goes on to discuss in detail Edwin Morgan's relationship with Veronica Forrest-Thomson, and mentions those women who were involved in concrete internationally, and recognised through anthologies at the time, most famously Mary Ellen Solt, Ilse Garnier, Bohumila Grögerová. There are clear reasons, I believe, for Thomas not to have included the contents of the article within the finished book – both constraints of space and a model set up to accommodate masculine narratives of

¹ Greg Thomas, 'Concrete Poetry and Scottish Women's Writing: The Case of Veronica Forrest-Thomson', *Contemporary Women's Writing*, 14:2-3 (2020), pp 198-219, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cww/vpaa021>.

² Ibid.

participation withing the ‘brotherhood’ of concrete poetry. The women whose work forms a peripheral ring around those working more centrally within concrete haunt the book, but never satisfactorily coalesce: this feels entirely fitting in terms of timescales and constraints, though given the breadth of influences Thomas integrates, one cannot help but seek them. Particularly of note in this exclusion are Sue Finlay, Ian Hamilton Finlay’s wife, or Jessie McGuffie, with whom he founded Wild Hawthorn Press.

Overall, however, this is an exceedingly engaging, thorough, and generous book, which evidences minutely detailed primary research, and which gives voice to the vigour, complexity and wildness of the proliferation of ‘second wave’ concrete poetry in Scotland and Ireland. Thomas has achieved, with *Border Blurs*, a vital primer on this period of concrete poetry, and it provides deep analysis of the ways that Finlay, Cobbing, Morgan and Houédard were associated with and contributed to this movement, which are long overdue.

Zoë Skoulding, *Poetry & Listening: The Noise of Lyric*, Liverpool University Press, 208pp, 2020.

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The Noisy Lyric and the Work of Listening

Zoë Skoulding’s *Poetry & Listening: The Noise of Lyric* (2020) explores creative reconfigurations of sound in a contemporary poetry scene that has increasingly facilitated lively exchanges between the printed text, audio-visual media and performing bodies. The book reads, with a special emphasis on aurality as both metaphor and material condition, a diverse set of British and American poets rarely assembled together in contemporary scholarship. Skoulding’s inspiration for the enterprise is the classic volume *Close Listening* (1998) edited by Charles Bernstein, and though her interpretations of listening and noise are deliberately more figurative and diversified than Bernstein’s, the performed poem is almost as pervasive a concern.

Despite what the book and chapter titles might suggest, Skoulding’s work does not go into the technical details of any apposite discipline that might produce a more or less empirical theory of listening and sound in poetry, whether it is cognitive science, linguistics, or biology; it also tends to avoid discussion of poetic metrics, rhythm and alliteration. Music is discussed occasionally but in very general terms. In other words, it

is not a handbook for how best to ‘listen’ to poetry, whether printed or performed, nor about how ‘listening’ to or within poetry occurs at the level of sensation or cognition. In fact, the ‘sound’ that interests this book is that which filters into poetry from a vaguely defined ‘outside’—popular songs, other languages, other media, ‘othered’ social identities, the background ‘hum’ of cultural habits, the non/post-human manifesting as or though technology and the biosphere, or a general unintelligibility: all these get tagged as ‘noise,’ and it is to this noise that the essays in this book ardently lend their fictive ears. While the category of the lyric remains largely undertheorized in the book, Skoulding’s general tendency is to push the concept away from the domain of personal utterance and towards collective subjectivities and non-human or post-human alterities. Her central argument is that ‘a number of contemporary poets are responding to an acoustic field that has been expanded by developments in recording technology and approaches to sound, and that this is enabling them to reflect and create new forms of lyric subjectivity as well as new relationships between bodies and environments’ (Skoulding 1). This, then, is the broad and hardly contestable direction in which Skoulding proceeds, though the book’s genius is best sought not in its dogged pursuit of a linear argument but in the breadth of its interests and the care with which it reads individual texts and their contexts. Though Skoulding stresses the importance of Jean-Luc Nancy’s essay *À l’écoute* for the book, and though she does occasionally cite his not-entirely-translatable distinction between *écouter* and *entendre*, her chapters generally draw upon multiple theoretical texts more appropriate for the specific problems at hand and wisely avoid Nancy’s post-Heideggerian ontological speculations that would hardly have resonated with the book’s largely materialist poetics and politics.

Skoulding shows excellent judgement in choosing Denise Riley as the starting point for her enquiries. Riley, perhaps more than any other poet of her generation, has pursued the absconding voice of lyric poetry with a philosophical intensity and persistence—even into the world of the dead—that at many points challenge the distinction between theory and practice. Skoulding explores key theoretical and poetic texts to suggest that the simultaneity of speaking and listening in Riley—which replicates her systematic destabilization of the inside-outside and public-private dichotomies—is enabled by soundscapes that alternate between noise, language and song. The individual who remembers and misremembers, mourns and laments, does so without believing in a traditional ‘lyric’ subject or unified subjectivity, instead staking everything on the generic nature of her experiences—even the most idiosyncratic. In Riley, Skoulding suggests, the physicality of the lyric as song, its noise as echo, and the fragmentation

of the traditional lyric 'I' resist the givenness of sound as meaning, and posit an 'open' form of listening grounded in what might be called noise.

Skoulding's most thorough discussion of the term 'noise' appears in her chapter on Sean Bonney. For Bonney, noise is political; it is the excess that disrupts and interrupts established systems or 'corporate reality' (44). In exploring the relationship between noise as acoustic phenomenon and noise as political disruption, Skoulding attempts to widen the scope of sound in poetry without reducing it to metaphor: she seeks to retain the aural and physical qualities of sound while corralling categories such as political resistance and protest under the heading of 'noise' and placing the radical deconstruction of subjectivities within the ambit of an agential 'listening' that is both metaphorical and actual. Drawing upon the work of Jacques Attali (*Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 1977), Skoulding theorizes, with some help from Fredric Jameson, that Bonney's political reading of noise is intimately related to the post-'60s attempt to privilege cultural micropractices as 'prophetic and annunciatory' sites that host revolutionary acts (45). Polyvocality and shock tactics that emerge from the surrealist tradition and are inflected by punk sensibilities represent for Bonney a politics of noise that hears lack of harmony and rhythm—qualities he associates with the police state—as noisy, disruptive, and revolutionary even as he identifies the lyric 'I' as the last redoubt from which the forces of capitalist homogenization can be resisted. Skoulding makes some important but risky moves here that she uses throughout the book: polyvocality is presented as a species of noise; even snatches of popular songs, or song lyrics, that enter the poem are interpreted as noise; translation is proposed as a privileged site of listening as well as of noise. (Later, she will also add intermediality and various modes of code-shifting to this prospering list.) As with many other chapters in the book, this too begins with the description of a public reading by Bonney: indeed, such ekphrastic descriptions are central to Skoulding's attempt to expand the poetic sensorium while remaining within a purely textual space.

Skoulding's discussion of Caroline Bergvall's multimedia piece *Drift* centres around the concept of acousmatic sound, a term mostly used in discussions of cinema to describe sound emerging from a source that is not visible on the screen. At one level, the choice of acousmatic sound might seem inappropriate for poetry: a poem on a page might be read as the very inverse of acousmaticity: the source—the text, the word on the page—is present, and it is the sound that remains spectral. But Skoulding's implication seems to be that in works such as *Drift*, the lyric subject or persona is indeterminate, and to that extent, hidden from the reader. She calls attention to the 'hybrid' nature of *Drift*, its use of homophonic translation, and Bergvall's collaborative performances of the poem with percussion by Ingar Zach and visual programming by

Thomas Köppel: this leads to ‘noise’ (in Skoulding’s extended sense) at multiple levels that invites a critical listening consonant with *Drift*’s political and ethical concerns. I could not help feeling that a lot of the material on film could have been compressed and a theory of acousmatic lyricality—an excellent idea in itself—more carefully presented. A fascinating subheading, titled ‘Listening and Repetition’, ends up as more of a brief aside.

‘Synesthesia’, the fourth chapter, looks at the work of Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge and Carol Watts; the materiality of sound and its particular affinity to touch—the ear drum being stretched skin—are important for the argument here. Drawing upon Berssenbrugge’s poems and her collaboration with the artist Richard Tuttle, Skoulding suggests that sound represents the possibility of a receptivity that is unaffected by the conceptual borders between the animate and the inanimate, the human and the non-human. In the context of Berssenbrugge’s discussion of the poem ‘Hearing’ with Charles Bernstein, Skoulding explores a possible Buddhist dimension of listening (though Berssenbrugge herself prefers the term ‘hearing’). The act of hearing in the poem is attributed to a ‘she’ whom Berssenbrugge identifies as ‘Kuan Yin’ (or ‘Guanyin’), the female bodhisattva of compassionate listening. Citing Yugon Kin, Skoulding connects Berssenbrugge’s poem with ‘a compassionate hearing’ (89) that is more resonant, inclusive and accepting than the more focussed and selective act of listening. Her discussion of Berssenbrugge provides a useful and non-Western dimension to the listening-hearing dichotomy.

Skoulding’s reading of Carol Watts’ *Sundog* in the same chapter is perhaps less satisfying. Noise is, as in Bonney, proposed as resistance, this time through a chiasmic opposition between language and sense perception: ‘Language is the noise of the senses and the senses are the noise of language’ (95). I could not help wishing that Skoulding had called attention to the obtrusive presence of birdsong and repetition in *Sundog* and addressed Watts’ suggestion that sound is what a collective subject (we) falls back on when sight fails or deceives the lyric ‘I’. Instead, Skoulding leaves us with somewhat underwhelming close-readings of sections that don’t always seem pertinent, and with largely generic statements about noise and listening that don’t really need Watts’ poem for evidence. Skoulding’s reading of *Sundog* is an instance of this book’s strange resistance to ferry its arguments to their logical conclusions. What she describes as synesthesia in Watts, for instance, could just as easily be read as the juxtaposition of multiple sensory experiences and cognitive states without implying the boundary transgressions characteristic of synesthesia: some careful disambiguation might have helped. Also, the obvious tension between the visual and the auditory in Watts would have been as good a place as any to confront and historicize traditional hierarchies of

the senses that constitute an implicit subtext for *Poetry and Listening*, especially since most of the chapters discuss visual and audio-visual material.

In 'Echo: Claudia Rankine and Vahni Capildeo', Skoulding addresses the problem of race through the category of echo, read largely as the reproduction of remembered speech and language in poetry. Pointing out that African Americans are not 'erased' by white culture but are rendered 'hypervisible' by it, Skoulding proposes that listening, rather than looking, might be 'a receptive and an anxious response' (102, 103) that white people need to adopt towards black experience. By choosing relatively less violent instances of racism, Rankine turns the 'liminal background hum' of racism into 'audible shock' (100): 'Providing more shocking examples of violence would run the risk of activating the reader's automatic response to filter out noise, rather than the straining to listen and discern that is prompted by the acousmatic effects of these vignettes' (101). The implicit assumption here is that an excess of shocking material and affect would automatically invite the label of 'black anger', and therefore inhibit the careful listening that Rankine's deliberate understatements evoke. This is a striking insight, though sometimes Skoulding herself seems to become a victim of such 'acousmatic' writing. She includes in this chapter a mystifying section called 'White Listening', in which she assumes that the undisclosed speaker quoted by Rankine is white because a) s/he gives advice, which automatically implies white superiority, and b) because the advice consists of mentally rejecting racist speech, a mode of self-control Skoulding believes only white people to be capable of. Her readings, however, largely focus on the intermedial and performed material in *Citizen*, and are very well done—indeed, she is often at her best while discussing multi-modal artefacts. In her analysis of the segment 'Script for Situation video created in collaboration with John Lucas', for instance, she foregrounds the difficulty of achieving authentic listening when the written 'script', the video and the musical score retain language as only one among a range of sensory and cognitive experiences (105). On the whole, the presence of other media is considered 'noisy' and 'disruptive' (107).

In the same chapter, she discusses Vahni Capildeo's use of multiple languages and homophony as an instance of echo; the 'noise' or 'noisy resistance' (111) that arises from orthographic and syntactic representations of Caribbean speech and idioms is also categorized as echo. One of the most interesting sections in this chapter is Skoulding's examination of ekphrastic listening in Capildeo's response to Louise Bourgeois's *Insomnia Drawings*, which incorporates language and musical notation into its visual rhetoric. Here the poem echoes images as well as multiple languages, creating a spatialization of sound, or a 'sounded space' (115) that invites more attentive, active

forms of listening. Again, the implications of the convergence of visual and verbal signs for the act of listening could have been, perhaps, usefully explored here.

A chapter is devoted to Tom Raworth's poetry of the '70s in the context of two musical terms, 'improvisation' and 'intuition'. Improvised music, Skoulding points out using Derek Bailey's work, is a performance bound to a specific spatio-temporal moment that tests the limits of the medium's referentiality and turns the audience's response into an act of reciprocal improvisation. The improvisator's 'intuition', which indicates a perceptual openness that multiplies meaning and signification, also enables a form of undirected, multivalent listening (121). The alternation between continuous meaning-making and disjunction in Raworth could be read as a species of improvisation, which depends on the tensions between a given structure and departures from it. Improvisation is no doubt a fitting descriptor for Raworth's method. He is also a poet who has used listening and the literal reproduction of overheard speech as explicit tools for poetic production. For Skoulding, Raworth's use of such 'found materials' activates the theatrical meaning of improvisation as making do with whatever is at hand: this enables the convergence of language as structure and signification on the one hand, and language as material, physical, and resistant presence on the other. Skoulding recognizes that in music, improvisation tends to be associated with a traditionally 'lyrical' or highly personal expressivity as opposed to collective or decentred modes of subjectivity. But Raworth's 'improvisations', she argues, are grounded in listening to the 'other', thereby refuting the centrality of the lyric subject and enabling impersonal, collective modes of improvisation (125-26). This chapter neatly connects listening and music with an impersonal and material lyric.

In an inclusive but somewhat disjointed chapter titled 'Performance: Listening Bodies', Skoulding looks at the sound and performance poetry of Emma Bennett, Jonathan Skinner, Holly Pester, Tracy Morris, Hannah Silva, and Rhys Trimble. She also pays tribute here to Bob Cobbing, whose work was crucial for the development of sound-based and performance poetics in Britain. The mediation of technology, especially recorded sound, in poetry performances is a recurrent theme. The chapter begins with discussions of Emma Bennett and Jonathan Skinner, two poets who use recorded birdsong as contexts for their poetry. In 'Bird Talk', Bennett listens to birdsong through headphones and then articulates what she hears through 'language, non-language and half-language' (qtd. in Skoulding 140). The result is a species of homophonic translation, a practice that interests Skoulding throughout the book. A similar attempt at translation is described in Jonathan Skinner's essay 'Stirrup Notes: Fragments on Listening', which discusses, through poetry and prose commentary, the 'translation' of the sounds and rhythms of birdsong into English words. Instead

of aspiring for 'pure' sound, these poetries juxtapose referential language with non-referential bird-sounds, invoking, in Skoulding's view, non-romantic and mechanically and conceptually mediated engagements with nature. The history and contemporary fortunes of birdsong in poetry in the context of changing habits of recording and listening to sound would, if pursued thoroughly, have made for an extremely interesting chapter. Skoulding instead quickly discards this theme to comment briefly on poets such as Holly Pester and Hannah Silva whose work also involves use of microphones and recorded sound, so as to model lyric subjectivity as emphatically posthuman. The American poet Tracie Morris is also included here: her performances incorporating primal sounds—screams, for instance—enact states of dissociation similar to possession, again destabilizing the lyric 'I'. The chapter concludes with the Welsh poet Rhys Trimble's performances that incorporate elements of ritual, the strangeness (for an English-speaking audience) of the Welsh language, and distractions in the form of ambient music to create modes of half-comprehending listening that challenge both the listeners' and the performer's sense of self and self-possession. The final chapter returns to the theme of translation—in this instance, translations of Petrarch's sonnets by three important British poets: Peter Hughes, Jeff Hilson and Tim Atkins. As these poets use homophonic translation, irony, bathos, and procedural devices to expand and enhance Petrarch's sonic possibilities, the Italian sonnet's traditional prestige undergoes, Skoulding suggests, a demotic revivification based on the possibility of autonomous sound and the primacy of listening over sense-making.

The book would have profited from a longer conclusion; the terse chapter summaries that are offered in the end create the impression that the book is not really interested in overarching arguments, and perhaps this is a deliberate choice on Skoulding's part. *Poetry & Listening* is a well-written set of essays worth reading for its inclusion of a broad range of poets, its careful analysis of texts and performances, and its success in developing an extended set of pertinent categories through which contemporary poetry's relationship to sound can be meaningfully explored. I do wish Skoulding had chased all her rabbits all the way down their respective holes, but perhaps that would be too much to ask; the bright glimpses she offers of the poetic underground blinking its way into visibility ought to be plenty for now.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

